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General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 September 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Plevneliev: We congratulate His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and extend our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his commitment during the previous session and his strong efforts aimed at promoting transparency and efficiency within the United Nations system.

The theme of this year's general debate, "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", is extremely important for all of us. The full and timely implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is crucial in order to ensure progress and prosperity around the world, strengthen peace and make our planet a better place in which to live.

But peace and freedom are being tested today. We are witnessing the worst security situation since the end of the Second World War. National borders and international principles are being challenged. In many regions, war and terror prevail. States and institutions are disintegrating. The world is out of balance today. Terrorism is on the rise. No one is immune, and no one is safe. War zones have become breeding grounds for radical ideologies and launch pads for terrorist activities. Violations and abuses of human rights occur every day, and innocent women and children are the most affected. In these turbulent times, the number of crises around the world is at a record high. Protracted conflicts are causing so many humanitarian tragedies. Conflict resolution and reconciliation have become more challenging to achieve and sustain. It is very easy to occupy and destroy, but it is very difficult to rebuild and reconcile broken societies.

Europe is a symbol of hope for millions of refugees. Inspired by our common values, we are determined to further strengthen our efforts to manage migration in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law. Countries that are close to the conflict zones, like Bulgaria, are facing an unprecedented challenge. We welcome the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) as a symbol of our joint effort to strengthen international cooperation so as to better protect and assist refugees.

Migration should be managed through collective global efforts in a responsible way. Our specific focus should be on the protection of the human rights of migrants and refugees, especially the most vulnerable — women,

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children and persons with disabilities. At the same time, all migrants have the duty to comply with the laws of their countries of residence. Bulgaria welcomes the emphasis on global responsibility-sharing. That crucial element should guide us in building partnerships between the countries of origin, transit and destination and the entire international community.

The current global humanitarian crisis reminds us that we must tackle global issues in an inclusive and integrated manner, focusing on the root causes. It is also a crisis for children. We must hear their voice. We must recall that a child is first a child and then a refugee. The child is entitled to the full set of rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including family reunification.

The United Nations has a crucial role to play in addressing those challenges. Our crisis-management efforts require a holistic United Nations response, preventive diplomacy, mediation, peacebuilding, resilience and reconciliation. Bulgaria participates actively in the work of the Group of Friends of Mediation, which contributes to those efforts. We are committed to helping crisis-stricken countries recover. There is an old saying: "Prevention is better than a cure."

Bulgaria is committed to the global efforts aimed at preventing and resolving ongoing conflicts. During our very successful chairmanship-in-office of the South-East European Cooperation Process, Bulgaria proposed concrete initiatives focused on enhancing security, stability, connectivity, reconciliation and sustainable development in the Balkans. Bulgaria plays an important role in strengthening the expertise of the European Union in the region and supports the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries in the Western Balkans.

The European Union (EU) has unique significance and strong legitimacy because of the peaceful discussions it holds and its settlement of differences by consensus, because of its shared fundamental rights and rules, and because it has achieved an unprecedented level of integration and cooperation among its member States. Last week, Bulgaria very successfully hosted the annual meeting of the Arraiolos Group. Ten Presidents of EU member States exchanged ideas and shared a vision of how to rebuild trust in the European Union and bring lasting stability and prosperity to the Balkans. That served as an important recognition of the friendly, balanced and principled foreign policy that Bulgaria is conducting today.

We need to team up and develop common strategies, rather than build fortresses to defend short-sighted national interests. We have to engage leaders throughout the world and from all sectors of society, and not just acknowledge but resolve conflicts. We need prevention, and we need to be proactive so as to detect crises early and solve them. We need to empower diplomacy and promote principles, not interests and weapons. We need to reconfirm rather than renegotiate the principles of international order. As the Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, stressed during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, we need a step change in the way we address humanitarian crises by looking more rigorously into the root causes.

Bringing peace and reconciliation back to Syria can be achieved only through a Syrian-led political process that involves an inclusive transition that takes into account the aspirations of all parts of society. It is important to create favourable conditions enabling the resumption of the intra-Syrian peace talks as soon as possible.

We do not want to go back to the time when great Powers allocated their spheres of influence. We cannot once again allow political interests to divide and occupy the territory of sovereign States or create frozen conflicts.

The recent escalation of the conflict in Ukraine is a source of deep concern. Any attempt to destabilize Ukraine is unacceptable. Bulgaria strongly supports the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. My country renews its call for the full implementation of the Minsk Agreements and reiterates its consistent policy of the non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Bulgaria supports the process of building a peaceful, stable and self-reliant Afghanistan. We will continue to contribute to the reconstruction and State-building process in Afghanistan through our participation in the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. We are contributing to the Afghanistan National Army Trust Fund, and we are assisting in building Afghanistan's administrative capacity through our official development assistance.

The Middle East peace process has reached a critical stage. New initiatives are needed to revive the two-State solution. Bulgaria welcomes the recent efforts in that direction, especially the Quartet report. We highly value and fully support the work of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, in his challenging mission. We reaffirm our position that the two-State solution is the realistic, just and lasting way to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A solution that could satisfy the aspirations of both sides can be achieved only through direct negotiations, with no conditions attached, and in conformity with all relevant international obligations.

Bulgaria supports the implementation of the agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, which is an important step forward in achieving stability in the region. We hope that all agreed measures will be fully implemented.

The fifth consecutive nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in September, is a direct violation of Security Council resolutions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to suspend its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and to resume dialogue with the international community, including in the framework of the Six-Party Talks.

Terrorism and violent extremism are an alarming threat to peace and security. It is a source of grave concern that such acts have increased dramatically. We cannot and should not accept that this is the new normal. Every effort must be made to eradicate terrorism and violent extremism. Bulgaria is a proud member of the international Anti-Terrorism Coalition.

The United Nations has an important role to play in managing and coordinating comprehensive counter-terrorism actions across the world. The relevant Security Council resolutions and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy serve as a good basis for international cooperation. Bulgaria supports the Secretary-General's review of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture.

The prevention of radicalization is an essential part of the response. Bulgaria has adopted the required domestic legislation and has built the necessary institutional capacity. Education, the protection of cultural heritage and the protection of human rights will help us deal with the reasons that lead individuals to feel forced to join violent extremist groups. The role of UNESCO in those efforts is crucial. We commend the dedicated work and invaluable contribution of Ms. Irina Bokova and her leadership in promoting education and intercultural dialogue globally. Her outstanding performance and strong commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations are fundamental for achieving sustainable progress and long-lasting results.

We made history with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Now it is time for their implementation. It is up to all of us to adapt our national strategies and deliver on those commitments. As President of Bulgaria, I was so proud to be among the first to sign the historic Paris Agreement during the high-level ceremony at the Secretariat in New York. My country supports the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement. I have the pleasure to announce that the Bulgarian Government has already initiated its domestic ratification procedure.

My country is elaborating its national programme for development, Bulgaria 2030, by actively engaging civil society, young people, the private sector and media. We are focusing on education, high-tech and innovation to build a green and energy-efficient economy. To that end, we are educating young Bulgarians on the importance of sustainability. Bulgarian schools, in partnership with UNICEF, have introduced special programmes to teach children about the SDGs.

Peace is not a given, and it is up to all of us to protect it. And peace is not just the absence of war. Peace is human rights. Peace is the rule of law. Promoting human rights is a core purpose of the United Nations and defines its identity. Bulgaria has been strongly advocating for strengthening the human rights pillar of the United Nations. Bulgaria is determined to further contribute to promoting human rights as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021, and we rely on our partners' valuable support for our candidacy.

Bulgaria attaches great importance to the protection of children and the promotion of their rights. As Co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Children and SDGs, Bulgaria has been strongly advocating for the integration of children's human rights in all major intergovernmental processes at the United Nations. It is our firm conviction that children should be at the heart of global action. We made children's rights a strategic priority for the Council of Europe during our

chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, and we are so proud to see the adoption of the Sofia Strategy for the Rights of the Child and the full support of all 47 member States. I commend the excellent work of the previous Bulgarian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Stefan Tafrov, his vice-presidency of the UNICEF Executive Board and his dedication to the cause of children and human rights.

In the past few decades, the United Nations has made significant progress in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Those efforts should continue and be further strengthened. Bulgaria is actively engaged at all levels in promoting gender equality, as well as in ending gender-based discrimination and all forms of violence against women and girls. My country strongly supports the UN-Women Planet 50-50 campaign for achieving gender equality by 2030. Women in Bulgaria enjoy full participation in all areas of life. In our Government, two of three deputy prime ministers and half of the ministers are women. Two thirds of the magistrates at all levels are women. Bulgaria ranks third in the EU in terms of women's participation in the executive boards of large companies.

In recent years, there has been growing support in the international community for ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in gaining access to senior decision-making positions, including the post of Secretary-General. The relevant resolution 69/321 stresses the need to ensure equal and fair distribution based on gender and geographical balance, while meeting the highest possible requirements, in the appointment of the Secretary-General. After eight male Secretaries-General, the time has come for a capable and respectable woman from Eastern Europe to lead the United Nations. Bulgaria has a very strong candidate, a true leader with extensive experience in international relations and excellent management skills, a candidate who deserves Member States' trust and support.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rosen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kagame: During the past year, the international community concluded landmark agreements on sustainable development and climate change and renewed its commitment to work together to combat violent extremism. Those are the most serious matters before the international community today, and our joint efforts offer the prospect of transforming our world as a whole, not just a part of it. After all, the progress of every country is closely linked to the progress of every other country, and we all have a role to play.

Now is the time for implementation. We can stay on course if we keep a few things in mind. First, we must always remember that the ultimate purpose of our efforts is to transform the lives of real people by enhancing their well-being, safety and access to opportunity. Secondly, we must build on what we have learned so far. That means being inclusive — especially of women, because if they are not able to reach their potential, then none of us are. I am proud to be a HeForShe and urge others to support this important campaign.

We have also learned the lesson that technology has to be part of the strategy for achieving all the global goals. Everyone in the world needs to have access to high-speed Internet, as the Secretary-General's Broadband Commission has advocated. Rwanda is pleased to be associated with that effort, and I commend the International Telecommunication Union and UNESCO for the good work that they have done and continue to do. We have also seen the importance of forging meaningful partnerships with the private sector so as to improve the speed and scale of the delivery of Internet services. Such perspectives will inform the work of the new Sustainable Development Goal Centre for Africa, which Rwanda is pleased to host with the support of our partners.

There has to be real continuity between the various frameworks that have guided and will now guide our collective action. Those agreements are not slogans or fashions, but hard-won statements of global consensus about the world that we wish to leave to our children. Let us implement them with the speed and seriousness that they deserve.

There are encouraging signs of progress on the horizon. Next month, more than a thousand delegates will gather in Kigali to consider a ground-breaking amendment to the Montreal Protocol on the Ozone Layer that would phase out hydrofluorocarbons, a major type of greenhouse gas. The nearly 30-year-old Montreal Protocol is already one of the most successful international agreements in history, and it now affords us the opportunity to take a significant step forward in implementing the one-year-old Paris Agreement. I urge all Member States to join with us to pass that important measure.

The world is changing for the better, as the ground is being levelled by technology. The way we relate to each other in the international community also has to change. The preservation of international peace and security depends on maintaining a shared vision of the outcomes that we want for our world and the values that guide our cooperation. That accounts for the continued relevance and durability of the United Nations. Our collective responsibility for the rights and welfare of refugees and migrants should be seen in that light. The issue must be addressed with consistency and compassion at all times. It cannot become a crisis only when the wealthier countries begin to be affected.

Rwanda will continue to play its part. We have gotten many things right, but there is no doubt that we could be achieving even more. If we keep the people whom we are fighting for at the front of our minds and build on lessons learned, there is no reason why we cannot achieve everything that we have committed ourselves to.

In closing, I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been a champion of technology and a strong advocate for sustainable development, as well as for other matters that have needed fair treatment. Even in the most difficult situations, he has been a voice of reason, and we wish him well.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Rwanda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: Last year, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, we, all together, pledged to improve various conditions facing humankind and to protect our natural habitat. Under the theme "The Sustainable Development Goals: a universal push to transform our world", we have now convened at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly to assess the progress and to deliberate on current and emerging challenges in the overall pursuit of the underlying objective of passing a better world on to our children and grandchildren.

I congratulate you, Sir, and the people of Fiji on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, and we rely on your vast experience to successfully conduct the affairs of this session in the furtherance of the hopes that we share for a better world. In the same vein, I commend His Excellency Mr. Mogens Lykketoft of Denmark, under whose able leadership the affairs of the seventieth session were conducted, including the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We wish to recognize, in a special way, the innovative and creative leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has energized the international community's collective pursuit of the noble objectives of the United Nations. We acknowledge, with profound gratitude, his stewardship, which brought a paradigm shift in development programmes within the United Nations system. It ushered in the new global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which envisions a world without poverty, a world of shared values and

responsibilities, a world of gender equality and women's empowerment and a planet saved through effective mitigations of threats — in effect, a world that leaves no one behind. As the Secretary-General's tenure ends later this year, I would like to him to know that his actions and innovations have inspired us all. He has our very best wishes for success in his future endeavours.

We congratulate and welcome the International Organization for Migration (IOM) into the mainstream of the United Nations, particularly at this time when the world is facing the daunting challenge of a massive migration and refugee crisis. We anticipate cogent inter-agency dialogue and collaboration between the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in facilitating the voluntary return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons. We call on the two agencies to forge an effective response to the issue of migrant-smuggling and human trafficking, bearing in mind that women and children are the main victims of organized crime and modern slavery.

The call for the reform of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, rings louder in the deafening silence from some quarters. The equity that we promote through our commitments at the United Nations must be respected by all of its bodies. We urge the big and powerful nations of the world to bring that long silence to an end.

This session is taking place at a time when there is an escalation of conflicts engulfing millions of people in many parts of the world. We note with particular concern the rise of international terrorism, extremism, xenophobia and violence, which continue to pose a threat to global, political, social and economic stability. The unabated crises that we continue to witness in the Middle East, on the continent of Africa and in other parts of the world are a challenge to the noble objectives of the United Nations. The mass displacement and suffering imposed on the people of Syria, who are forced to migrate far from their homeland, is a blight on the conscience of the world and questions the resolve of the United Nations.

The current state of our world, conditioned by the realities of insecurity, requires collective, concerted action to avoid unacceptable levels of deprivation, poverty and human suffering. At our subregional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has demonstrated its commitment and preparedness to combat terrorism in Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Nigeria, as well as in other parts of the subregion, with valued support from partners in the international community. We are optimistic about the regional initiatives and collaborations launched by the African Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations that aim to help consolidate peace and security on the African continent. The ECOWAS initiative to bring peace to Guinea Bissau, the African Union efforts in Mali and South Sudan, and the Lake Chad Basin Commission's efforts to combat Boko Haram and other terrorist groups show progress and clearly demonstrate the relevance of regional solidarity.

With a view to strengthening peace and security within ECOWAS, we have emphasized the fight against organized crime, especially cross-border trade in illicit small arms and light weapons, drug and human trafficking, and piracy. As the current Chair of ECOWAS, I can confirm that we are unwaveringly committed to continuing our efforts to achieve integration through infrastructure development, trade and investment, natural resource management, food security, and peace and security with renewed vigour.

Liberia maintains its confidence in the ability of the United Nations as the most viable body in the search for global peace and security. Liberia reaffirms its commitment to supporting the United Nations in its endeavours to achieve world peace and security, democratic governance and the advancement of the universal principles of human rights. We reiterate our commitments to addressing extreme poverty, empowering women and girls, and bringing marginalized communities into mainstream society and making their voices heard. Those are the drivers of our transformational push to save our nation and our world.

Since our conflict ended in 2003, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has worked with Liberia, first to institute and then to consolidate security, peacebuilding efforts and governance gains in the country. I am pleased to report that the drawdown of UNMIL was successfully executed on 30 June, when Liberian security agencies assumed full responsibility for the security of our nation and people. We recognize the risks involved, given our severe fragility and the scarcity of resources, but we take up those responsibilities with confidence in the knowledge that our partners are still with us.

I am proud to have served as a Co-Chair on the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability, which initiated the process culminating in the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Liberia has embarked on its process of domesticating the SDGs through robust nationwide consultations and dialogues with major stakeholders, including the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, the private sector, civil society and faith-based organizations. With the support of our United Nations partners, we are formulating a road map to achieve full integration into our national development agenda.

With 43 per cent of the biodiversity in the West African region, Liberia is mindful of the need to protect the environment from the effects of global warming and climate change. Our commitment to sustainable land and forest governance and management remains firm, as our establishment of a legal verification mechanism and an enforced regulatory framework reflects. Our partnership with Norway has been helpful in that regard.

As a resilient and determined nation that has faced the challenges of several periods of devastation, Liberia is rising again. We are determined to walk the agreed road to the achievement of our Vision 2030, and to successfully conclude the first five-year phase of our Agenda for Transformation. Our democracy, stalled by years of conflict, stands firm as we march towards its most challenging and important task: the conduct of presidential and legislative elections in 2017.

On behalf of the people of Liberia, I thank the United Nations for helping us to preserve peace over the past thirteen years. I also thank the many international partners who have been with us on the road to recovery.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kaboré (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would like to join all those who have preceded me at this rostrum in offering you my sincere and warm congratulations on your election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We believe that your outstanding knowledge of the international scene and excellent personal qualities will ensure the success of our work. And I would be remiss in this pleasant duty if I did not also pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his vision and leadership and for all the work that he has done to strengthen the role of the Organization during his two terms.

Today, I am addressing the Assembly for the first time since my accession to the presidency of my country in November 2015. After going through a profound political crisis arising from its denial of certain basic democratic principles, Burkina Faso has returned to the core values underpinning democracy and the rule of law. The people of Burkina Faso, and especially our young people, have displayed great maturity and given proof, if any were needed, that nothing and no one can indefinitely suppress the desire for justice and freedom of a knowledgeable people who jealously guard their rights and dignity.

This is where I should express our deep appreciation to the United Nations and the international community in general, which rallied to our side throughout our fight. Their support, manifested in many ways, helped us to definitively restore normal constitutional order and to organize democratic, free and transparent presidential, legislative and local elections. My presence in this Hall today symbolizes, therefore, the restoration of those

rights and the recovery of our freedom. From now on, Burkina Faso is resolutely committed to consolidating its democratic process, supported by its firm commitment to achieving national reconciliation and establishing a genuine and permanent political dialogue.

Sustainable development has never figured as prominently on the agenda of the international community's priorities as it does now. Above all, our commitment to eradicating poverty and fighting inequality has never been stronger. We should therefore welcome the relevance of the theme of this year's session, which calls on us to give the push needed to transform our world through our effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals that we unanimously adopted last year, while ensuring, as the Secretary-General has so often urged us, that we leave no one behind.

For its part, and in order to give true meaning to the struggle that our people has waged for freedom and progress from its inception and in accordance with its mandate, the Government of Burkina Faso has committed to formulating a national economic and social development plan for the period from 2016 to 2020. Based directly on our people's aspirations, the plan — which reflects the broad guidelines of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the African Union's Agenda 2063 — will be presented to our technical and financial partners at a donors' round table to be held in Paris on 7 and 8 December. We know that we can count on the active solidarity of all concerned, whose support of the efforts of the Government of Burkina Faso will enable us to lay the foundations for the genuinely sustainable development that can ensure our country's peace, security, safety and stability.

The world today is facing formidable challenges that demand that we strengthen our collective action and intensify our joint efforts within the framework of our Organization. International terrorism and violent extremism have emerged as the major threats of our time. The unprecedentedly violent terrorist attacks that are being perpetrated without discrimination every day, all over the world, illustrate to perfection the reach of what is now a global scourge. As victims of it ourselves, we can appreciate its scope. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to the memory of every victim of those vile acts and to reiterate the sympathy and solidarity of the people of Burkina Faso with all the peoples and countries that they have touched.

We must realize that the effectiveness of our fight will depend on our ability to launch partnerships, pool our efforts and exchange information within the framework of a coherent, solid global coalition. The action that we are taking in the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) is part of that effort and should be supported.

Burkina Faso welcomes the Secretary-General's report on his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674), presented to the Assembly on 15 January, and calls for a draft comprehensive convention on terrorism to be finalized and adopted as soon as possible.

Our struggle will bear fruit only when we succeed in destroying the terrorists' rearguard and, especially, their sources of supply, and when we commit to addressing the causes of all such types of extremism, which include extreme poverty, injustice, inequality, intolerance and exclusion.

In that connection, how can we not think of the thousands of migrants and displaced people risking their lives every day in search of a better tomorrow, and turning the seas and oceans into open-air cemeteries? That is why we welcome the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1), which embodies our shared desire to find ways and means to arrive at a global pact for more effective and humane management of the issue of the mass displacement of refugees and migrants. We are more than ever convinced that refugees and migrants should no longer be seen as a threat but rather as an opportunity, not just for themselves but also for their host countries and countries of origin, helping to bring peoples and nations closer together.

Climate change is a major concern for us. Burkina Faso therefore welcomes the adoption of the Paris Agreement and calls for its ratification by all stakeholders. We hope that that new environmental pact will result in the developed countries significantly reducing their carbon emission levels and making good on their financial pledges so as to strengthen developing countries' resilience in the face of climate-related disasters. The 2016 Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Marrakesh in November, will be a milestone in that regard. Similarly, I also welcomed the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa in 2015, and the

Global Humanitarian Summit, held in May of this year in Istanbul, which enabled us to reiterate our commitments to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We all know that peace, security and development are inseparable. That is why Africa has thrown itself into efforts to seek peace and strengthen democracy. Burkina Faso therefore welcomes the significant progress recently made on our continent, including the free and transparent elections in several countries. While there is no doubt that tensions and crises still persist, we are confident that the political stakeholders in the countries concerned will be able to consolidate peace, stability and security and promote sustainable development.

The security situation in northern Mali, however, remains a source of great concern that deserves the international community's full attention, both on the importance of operationalizing the new mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali as soon as possible and on giving serious support to subregional initiatives, including the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel's rapid response force. The international community should also support the Government of Mali's establishment of the genuine drivers of development in the region. The same attention should be given to South Sudan and Somalia, so that they can finally turn the page on the violence, conflicts and crises that have plagued their institutional underpinnings and development efforts. Based on its respect for the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, Burkina Faso reiterates its call for a negotiated political solution to the question of Western Sahara.

The world will never be at peace as long as the Middle East is not at peace. We call for a peaceful, just and equitable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in harmony, within secure and recognized borders. We welcomed the efforts of the peace conference for Israel and Palestine organized by France in June. With regard to Syria, Iraq and Yemen, we urge the entire international community to commit to the quest for genuine peace, which must be based on respect for international law, so that the enormous potential of those countries can be harnessed to contribute to the welfare of their peoples and their region.

Burkina Faso also welcomes the gradual easing of relations between Cuba and the United States of America, and hopes that the process will culminate in definitive normalization and an end to the economic, financial and trade embargo on Cuba.

Regarding another significant indicator of the world's health, I would like to reiterate the importance of ensuring that the fight against HIV/AIDS continues to be active, as the risks of its resurgence, despite the progress that has been made, are enormous, owing to the rapid increase in young people as a percentage of the population. Burkina Faso remains determined to put an end to that scourge by 2030. On 13 July, we adopted a national strategic framework for combating HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections in order to focus our synergies and efforts on fighting sexually transmitted diseases for the period from 2016 to 2020. We welcome the holding of successive sessions of the high-level meeting on the subject, as well as the 21st International AIDS Conference, held in Durban in July. It is now up to the international community to take ownership of the conclusions of those forums in order to be able to bequeath to future generations a world free of that pandemic.

Regarding the issue of general disarmament, we must continue our efforts to build trust among our States. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a real threat to peace and security and the development of States, particularly in Africa. That threat would be significantly reduced by the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty. Burkina Faso firmly supports the actions of the United Nations aimed at achieving general and complete disarmament, in terms of both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

After the 71 years of its existence, it is vital that we undertake responsible and balanced reform of the United Nations if we are to achieve an international order that is more just, equitable and viable, based on a dialogue between peoples and civilizations and a culture of sharing and solidarity. Where reform of the Security Council specifically is concerned, Burkina Faso reiterates its commitment to and support of the African position, whose sole objective is to repair a historical injustice done to Africa.

This year we have the weighty responsibility of appointing a new Secretary-General of our Organization. While we welcome the efforts of the President to contribute to the transparency of the selection process, Burkina Faso urges all Member

States to also offer their help and support to whomever is charged with this globally unique position, so that he or she can put his or her skills and leadership to work in the exclusive service of peace, justice and development for all. I wish all of us success in our work.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ivanov (*spoke in Macedonian; English text provided by the delegation*): I am truly honoured to address this important forum as President of the Republic of Macedonia and to share with the Assembly the Republic of Macedonia's positions on the challenges facing us today.

The world is at a crossroads marked by numerous crises. We are in a period when fundamental changes are occurring in the world order. We are dealing with transformations that are difficult to stop or control. The centrifugal forces of globalization are calling into question the order that was established after the Second World War. And along with our redefinition of that order, we are redefining its values and principles. In a world in which the powerful do whatever they want and the weak do whatever they must, the rule of law has become the exception rather than the rule. Instead of international security and order, we have a lack of security and a lack of order. We have devalued the true and inalienable human rights and freedoms. Instead of respect for diversity, we are increasingly seeing persecution and the destruction of diversity.

There are crises in many regions and at many levels. Conflicts are tending to spread and deepen faster than they can be resolved and rooted out. Their diagnosis is often belated, and the measures taken are reactive rather than preventive, resulting in short-term, painful decisions rather than long-term, less painful solutions. If we were to describe the situation in the world today in one word, it would be "instability".

We have been openly fighting global terrorism since the very beginning of this millennium. The Republic of Macedonia is part of a coalition that has destroyed many terrorist cells and won many battles in the past 15 years, but we have not yet won the war against terror. In that regard, we are facing a serious challenge. Just like the mythical Hydra, for every terrorist cell that is destroyed, it seems as though two others appear in its place.

Terrorism in the twenty-first century has developed the ability to absorb defeats, withdraw, regroup and strike back. We are no longer dealing with organizations, but with movements aiming at conquering territories and being driven by ideas going far beyond ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences. In order to win the fight against terrorism, the use of military troops alone is not enough. It is necessary to fight using ideas and programmes to counter radicalization.

The Middle East, North Africa and many other regions are crumbling into bloody conflicts in which every day we see the mosaic of communities with different religions, languages and cultures, so painstakingly composed and cherished for centuries, being destroyed. Those conflicts have given rise to threats, risks, humanitarian crises and a new major movement of peoples.

On the other hand, a new reality is looming on the European horizon. Under the pressure of the financial and debt crisis, the social and political seams holding the European Union (EU) together are slowly beginning to rip. By erasing internal borders without securing its corridors in the process, the European Union is now unable to protect its external borders. Apart from other things, Europe is currently facing two key challenges — the migration crisis and the threat of terrorism.

The first migration wave eroded European institutions, mechanisms and policies. By preventing illegal migration, the Republic of Macedonia has succeeded in contributing to a large extent to overall security in Europe. Europe is already facing a second, more massive wave. More than 20 million migrants and refugees from Asia and Africa are located very close to the external borders of Europe. In the coming years and decades, millions of migrants will try to set foot on the European continent. The Republic of Macedonia has blocked illegal migration from entering deeper into EU territory. The European Union must find modalities and mechanisms to protect its borders, secure the corridors and integrate the migrants and refugees who have been admitted, but without assimilating them in the process.

The Republic of Macedonia has been an independent country for 25 years now. Since the first day of our independence, we have faced continuous and direct threats coming from territories of the EU and NATO member States, or countries under United Nations administration. A large portion of our internal risks and dangers are the result of crises imposed on us from the outside. With the exception of bilateral assistance — for which we are more than grateful — the Republic of Macedonia has been facing crises and reducing risks on its own. We are taking measures and making decisions to protect our territory, and thereby also European territory. And for doing that, we have suffered criticism and threats in the form of the blocking of our integration processes.

The indecisiveness of the EU in handling the migration crisis has jeopardized the security of the Republic of Macedonia. We were the first country in Europe to declare a state of crisis and to deploy army troops along the borders. As Supreme Commander, I am proud to say that with our crisis management system and a timely reaction, we have succeeded in protecting the national security of the Republic of Macedonia.

I am aware, however, that many in Europe are thankful for what the Republic of Macedonia has been doing for them. Some are braver and recognize that fact, some are less brave, but I believe that they still respect what we have been doing. The attitudes towards migrants, so far, have even created ghettos without walls in some European countries, in which those who are different are tolerated without ever being truly respected or accepted. Such attitudes have led to isolationism and alienation and have generated breeding grounds for radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism.

This year, the United Nations will elect a new Secretary-General. The Republic of Macedonia has nominated a former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for that high-profile position. We appreciate the efforts to make the process a transparent one that considers only the merits of each candidate. The selection process has already begun within the Security Council. On this occasion, I would like to wish the best of luck to Mr. Kerim and reiterate the desirability of electing the new Secretary-General from the ranks of the Group of Eastern European States. At the same time, I wish to thank the current Secretary-General, my friend Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his unrelenting efforts to tackle the various challenges we face, but also to reform the Organization.

However, as we discuss the reform of one of the most important elements of the United Nations system, we seem to forget that even the very goals of the Organization have been brought into question. We talk about human rights while neglecting one of the fundamental rights — the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The persecution of people of different faiths and beliefs is becoming more and more visible, not only in non-secular, but also in developed secular societies. Under the current circumstances, some even ask whether, today, the United Nations would ever be able to adopt the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

The Organization represents all countries with all of their differences. However, when making compromises, we should be careful not to compromise the fundamental values, freedoms and vision of the Organization. That vision is written in both the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Even Seneca, when explaining the essence of a city — in other words, a State — said:

> "The strength and security of cities are based on two things — the material from which houses are built and the laws that regulate relations."

A city is destroyed every time one of these two things is lacking. Owing to double standards and the lack of respect for international law, our international order is slowly devolving into global chaos and disorder.

In our quarter of a century of independence, the Republic of Macedonia has been well and truly able to

feel that cruel reality. On our path towards international recognition and integration, we have faced many blockages and suffered much injury. We have even had to deal with the denial of our right, as Macedonian citizens, to self-identification, without which there is no human integrity or dignity. Owing to that problem, even today, we are still blocked in our efforts to join international organizations, such as NATO and the European Union. For five years now, the Republic of Macedonia has been waiting for the international community to observe and respect the judgment of the International Court of Justice.

During the past few days, members of the Assembly have heard many statesmen speaking about the need to respect international law, and there will be just as many that will immediately forget what they were urging, once they step away from the podium. The judgment handed down by the International Court of Justice regarding the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece was delivered five years ago, as I reminded members of the Assembly two years ago, but that judgment has not been respected to this day. And that is one of the classic examples of the lack of effectiveness of our world Organization.

The indecisiveness of the European Union and NATO in failing to unblock the integration of the Republic of Macedonia was one of the main reasons for the perpetual internal political crisis in Macedonia, which reached a climax this year. However, the Republic of Macedonia is not an exception. The entire Balkan region is in stagnation. We see retrograde processes reappearing. The Balkan States believed, quite naively, that someone from the outside would solve all of their problems, and the EU obviously does not have such power.

Ms. Kasese-Bota (Zambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Even in such complex circumstances, the Republic of Macedonia is doing its utmost to maintain the best possible relations with its neighbours. With Greece, we have a difference that is subject to a process led by the United Nations. The two of us, as neighbouring countries, have one open issue, but thousands of areas of common interest and serious challenges, such as the migration crisis or security, which point to the need for close cooperation. The name dispute must not be allowed to impede maximum cooperation in all areas of common interest. But precious time has been lost.

I therefore welcome confidence-building measures between the two countries, and I call for their expansion and the introduction of new content. The sooner we deliver on those measures, the sooner we will be able to create a positive ambiance, so that we can find a solution to the issue of our name dispute within the framework of the Interim Accord, United Nations resolutions and the judgment of the International Court of Justice.

I am a Macedonian, my fellow citizens are Macedonians, and I am speaking in the Macedonian language from this rostrum, which is why we ask everyone to respect us as Macedonians, just as we respect everyone else's right to identify themselves as they feel. We respect the right to self-identification and human dignity of everyone else, and in the same way we ask for that to apply to us as well. As Macedonians, we wish to cooperate and to have the best possible relationship with all of our neighbours. There is no problem that cannot be solved and no difference that cannot be overcome. The only precondition is to respect one another and to reach solutions through dialogue.

Next year, the Republic of Macedonia will host the Brdo-Brijuni Process, an initiative that is slowly replacing declarative regional initiatives and mechanisms. My wish is to have the Prime Minister of Greece be a special guest at the summit.

I spoke about some fundamental changes in the world that are divisive, dangerous and disorienting. However, the problem does not lie in those conditions. They are only the consequences of an accumulation of wrong positions, decisions and steps. That is why humankind has lost its way in a labyrinth of crises. That is also why we should not be caught off guard by the crisis with respect to trust in political elites and in the global order itself.

As humankind, we have succeeded in achieving amazing scientific and technological developments that have paved the way for progress, simultaneously consuming all our free time and along with that the possibility of deeper thinking and contemplation. We thought ourselves to be the masters of nature, but we could not even overcome our own greed. This is a time of consumerism, moral relativism and extreme individualism. We have disturbed the fragile climate balance, the balance between humankind and nature, thus jeopardizing the future of our descendants. The Sustainable Development Goals, which the Republic of Macedonia fully supports, must correct that error. As a

signatory to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Republic of Macedonia has already established its national priorities and contributions with regard to climate change. The problem goes much deeper, though. It is high time that we try to find our way out of the labyrinth of crises.

As President, but also as a university professor, I always listen to the voices of young people. I know very well the challenges that they are facing. The potential of youth is still restricted by a multitude of not only political but also mental, economic and educational barriers. Young people around the world still do not have equal opportunities for high-quality education and employment, and they also suffer from the cruel rules of the international market.

For a long time, we have been the ones to decide on the future of youth, without allowing them to be part of the decision-making process. We took their needs, requests and wishes for granted, all the while expecting them to follow the rules of the game that we had created for them, without prior consultation. This is perhaps the reason why many global, regional and local policies were not supported by young people and remained on paper only. It is time for this to change. We need policies that are not only about youth, but ones that involve their participation. We need policies for youth, by youth.

Let me give an example. This year, in the framework of the School of Young Leaders, held under my patronage for seven years in a row, young people from the Republic of Macedonia and from the wider region were all part of an "idea laboratory" in which they were able to develop projects on sustainable development; the promotion and development of public administration; infrastructure, educational and health-care issues; boosting employment; and reducing poverty. Such projects should be supported and promoted, and in that respect I have already initiated contact with the relevant entities in the World Bank. These are projects involving innovative ideas and creative solutions for youth, who are not slaves to the old worldview, which is slowly disappearing.

We are aware that the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is not a ready-made recipe for achieving greater well-being, a better life for our citizens, a more democratic society or a healthier environment for future generations, but it does contain solid guidelines on how to realize these goals. However, even here we are facing a paradox. We now have an international system that is trying to bring about sustainable development while encountering difficulty in maintaining itself.

Young people are a generation of new technologies, a generation experiencing the advantages of global interconnection. Young people are already living in a world that provides access to an enormous amount of information. Let us allow them to introduce their idealism and perceptions into regional and global initiatives and organizations. Let us allow them to introduce their new, fresh views into the new realities in which we live, unburdened by the prejudices from the past. The past should be a place of reference, not a place of residence.

There is a saying that humankind is at its best when it has the highest degree of freedom. However, without laws, there is no freedom, only anarchy. If we wish to leave a safer world to future generations, we must respect international law. But we must also go back to the highest and most enduring moral principles and values, including respect for and acceptance of diversity.

Often we invent new ideals because we are afraid of the old ones. We look to the future with great enthusiasm because we are afraid to look back to the past. But on the dusty shelves of the past, besides conflicts, prejudice and enmities, we might also find models that enabled peaceful coexistence, respect and acceptance of diversity. One of them is our very own Macedonian model of integration without assimilation.

Part of the task of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is to find such models, promote them and make them applicable to today's modern, dynamic world. We must assist them in this respect so as to learn once again how to live with our deepest ethnic, religious, cultural and ideological differences.

A philosopher once said that there might have been better times. However, this is our time, and we are responsible for it. We have to think about those who will come after us, the youth. We must not be afraid, because fear is a filter through which we perceive only threats and not the possibilities that are before our very eyes.

Changing our vision in order to make it correspond to reality is the easiest thing to do. The hardest part is to change reality in order to make it correspond to the noble vision of the United Nations. Part of that vision involves finding a way to promote global governance

and order without establishing a world government and predominance of the powerful, and how to lay the foundations for a true multi-ethnic, multireligious and multilingual international society that is free, just, stable and safe.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Hilda C. Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Ms. Hilda C. Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Hilda C. Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Heine: I have the honour to convey the warm greetings of "Yokwe" on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Every year, world leaders gather at the United Nations to strengthen that which binds us all: that despite our vast differences, the fact is that we get more done when we work together and when we cooperate. As leaders, we know and accept that our efforts to improve the well-being of our peoples cannot, in the end, be at the expense of others, and we simply cannot leave any one behind.

To us as a low-lying island nation, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change demonstrates that international spirit of cooperation and interdependency. I used to be a teacher, so I implore those Member States that have not ratified the Paris Agreement to do their next homework from this week. It is imperative that the Paris Agreement enter into force this year. I know that the Agreement is not perfect. We need to do more to increase our commitments on mitigation, on adaptation and on finance. We must take every opportunity to remain below the 1.5° C limit needed for our survival.

I congratulate Mr. Thomson on his election as the first President of the General Assembly from a Pacific island country.

I am addressing the Assembly today as the first female leader of an independent Pacific island nation. In the Pacific, women and mothers are often at the heart of our communities, and they ensure resilience. If women do not plan for the long-term, families and communities will not thrive. It follows that, if Pacific island nations fail to plan, the rest of the world will suffer the loss of our vast fisheries and oceans. If world leaders act only for short-term gain, we will rob our youngest and future generations of their rightful inheritance.

I have travelled to the United Nations to share our Marshallese story of how we, a small island nation and a large-ocean State, are defining our future on our own terms. As a former United Nations Trust Territory, whose well-being was once entrusted to this very Organization, it is important that we not take this journey alone, but with the firm partnership of the international community.

First, our broad progress must be built on education in order to ensure that our young people have the tools to lead our future. We must, therefore, achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, on quality education. As an educator, I know how important it is that we turn around low indicators and provide an adequate education to all, not only by continuing to improve our teacher qualifications, but by designing a curriculum that also emphasizes our Marshallese language and ways of being. We must define ourselves in our own words and through our own customs. I am proud to announce a new research partnership with Columbia University Teachers College that will not only assist us with bilingual education, but also inspire us to serve as a model for others around the world.

Secondly, our future must be underpinned by our economic security and progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 1, to end poverty, Goal 8, on economic growth and Goal 10, to reduce inequality. For too long, we have been largely reliant on the assistance of others. While that has provided an important backstop for basic social development, it has also undermined our self-reliance. We face serious challenges as a small island State, but we also have unexplored potential for growth.

We must move towards a serious expansion of the private sector so as to create jobs and strengthen our national benefit from our sustainable resources, especially our fisheries, our role as a port State, tourism and copra exports. As we consider all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — as we think all the way out to 2030 and consider the mid-points, including 2023 — we must not only have an ambitious policy, but also define the solid financial pathway needed to get there.

Right now, our short-term economic risk up to and beyond 2023 is simply unacceptable, as we transition to a new trust fund. Recently, much has been said at the United Nations about innovative finance and building development and resiliency through private investment. Instead of doubting how that applies to my nation, I issue a stark challenge to ourselves and our partners to work closely with us in order to chart our new economic future to 2023 and beyond, with creative solutions to difficult problems. If we are truly serious about tackling the SDGs, let us truly find solutions for island-tailored innovative finance.

Thirdly, our national growth and well-being must be driven by a commitment to improve delivery on basic social development — health, food security and the environment. In particular, the most vulnerable groups in our islands, especially the elderly, the disabled and single parents, should be targeted. The Marshall Islands has the highest rate of diabetes incidence in the world. It is a national crisis, and our consumption of sugary food and beverages is literally killing us. Our environment is challenged by the overwhelming amount of plastic, metal cans and trappings of the modern Western world. And, as if our local communities do not have enough challenges, our vulnerability to natural hazards and climate-driven events like droughts and coastal flooding will be far worse in the future, even with strong efforts to curb global emissions under the Paris Agreement.

Even with the issue of our very survival on the line, we are committed to addressing those challenges with immediate action, working on SDG Goal 7, on affordable energy, Goal 3, on good health, Goal 6, on clean water and Goal 11, on sustainable communities. In order to counter diabetes, our Parliament is considering a sharp increase of import taxes on sugar-added beverages. We are taking forward and implementing, with international support, a disaster-risk-reduction plan and measures. Our Parliament is considering a national ban on plastic bags and the introduction of recycling in order to clean up our local communities and provide a modest income stream along the way. We are tasking our environment agency with addressing water quality and water security. We are moving on practical measures to reduce our costly reliance on oil through sustainable transport and more efficient and renewable energy forms. We cannot — and will not — ignore our pressing future risks.

As in many parts of the world, sadly, domestic violence is a serious issue in the Pacific. SDG 5 commits States to ending worldwide domestic violence against women and girls, and my Government is moving forward with a commitment to building safe houses — the first one to be known as Weto In Mour — for abused women. It may be that the Pacific and the world must adjust to a new era, when the voices of women and girls gain their rightful place in communities and homes and at all levels of politics, from local politics to the United Nations.

Our Pacific Ocean defines us and underpins SDG 14, on oceans. If we fail to conserve and realize a more equitable return from our rich fisheries, not only will our future be threatened, but global food security could be undermined. We are committed to the protection and sustainable use of our fisheries and ocean resources, but our good intentions are not enough. It is well past time that distant fishing nations and the global super-Powers who dominate our fisheries look beyond their plenary statements and into the real-world impact of many of their negotiating positions.

Marshallese have been coming to the United Nations for nearly 65 years to focus greater attention on the harm caused by nuclear-weapons testing, with a legacy and burden shared by few others. And we remain the only instance in which the United Nations ever authorized the specific use of nuclear-weapons testing, in Trusteeship Council resolutions 1082 (XIV) and 1493 (XVII), a fact which the United Nations has never acknowledged. Not many people in the world know of our own bitter experiences with nuclear detonation and what those weapons did to my country and the Marshallese people.

Most of us think of nuclear weapons only as weapons of mass destruction; they conjure up wartime images of levelled buildings and the incineration of all living things. But how many people in the world have truly experienced what we have — physical, mental,

environmental and cultural burdens that last for generations, and the displacement of our people from their ancestral islands? Those are not mere historical events. As a Special Rapporteur affirmed in 2012, they are fundamental human rights issues and the international community "has an ongoing obligation to encourage a final and just resolution" (A/HRC/21/48/Add.1, para 66(a)).

Words without action are of no benefit to our people. I am committing my Administration to renewing the focus on nuclear-impact issues. And I feel that I have every right not only to ask but to demand the full assistance of the international community and the United Nations system and tangible results from them. In the light of our experience, it is our fervent hope that such weapons of mass destruction will never again be tested or unleashed and that all nuclear-armed nations will have the necessary political will and empathy to disarm.

I appeal to the Government of the Democratic Republic of North Korea to halt any further nuclear-weapons tests and to achieve full nuclear disarmament.

Finally, my Government will follow through on our commitment to the Human Rights Council with respect to achieving SDG 16 for justice. We will advance core human rights treaties for ratification at the next session of our Parliament. Many such treaties are already reflected in our Constitution and affirm basic freedoms enjoyed worldwide. Those basic rights, our national plan, the Sustainable Development Goals and the identification of major national challenges and priority reforms included in my Administration's Agenda 2020: A Framework for Progress for the Republic of the Marshall Islands must all be addressed in a comprehensive effort.

I have spent most of my speech today urging that no one be left behind and demonstrating our goodwill to play our part. I must also emphasize that the role of Taiwan as a key stakeholder and its determination to contribute to global affairs should be better recognized. I call on the international community to support Taiwan's efforts as an advocate for regional and global stability, peace and dialogue, including in cross-Strait relations. The United Nations should be more committed to ensuring Taiwan's fundamental right to participate in mechanisms, meetings and activities of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, and Taiwan should be recognized for its strong contribution in working with us and others towards achieving the SDGs.

Given the importance of human rights to my country, I request that the Human Rights Council initiate a credible and independent investigation of alleged human rights violations in West Papua.

Let me close by saying that we must turn words into reality and move forward with a renewed and sharper focus on long-held priorities. This is a commitment of my Government, and I urgently call for international partnership.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Hilda Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Vicente (Angola) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation)*: It is a great honour to speak on behalf of the President of the Republic of Angola, His Excellency José Eduardo dos Santos, in the General Assembly, which seeks to address and find solutions to the multidimensional challenges facing the world.

The General Assembly is indeed a privileged forum whose aim is to find solutions to the most pressing international problems, to preserve peace, to strengthen collective security and to help renounce the use of force in international relations, while respecting the sovereignty of States, the protection and promotion

of human rights and the reaffirmation of the rule of law as fundamental principles of the international system.

During the seven decades of existence of the United Nations, there have been transformations in all aspects of life, such as a radical change in the nature of conflicts, international terrorism at unspeakable levels and unprecedented climate change. Those changes naturally require joint reflection on the role and future of the United Nations. We need an Organization capable of promoting international peace and security, acting quickly and effectively in conflict situations and addressing the most pressing challenges of our time. If for no other reason, these issues should provide an incentive to accelerate reforms aimed at revitalizing the United Nations system, in particular the Security Council.

In fact, reforming the Council is not merely optional but an imperative, and failure to carry it out could hinder the ability of the United Nations to act, thereby eroding its legitimacy and credibility.

The Republic of Angola is in favour of increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council in order to make it more representative and better equipped in its ability to respond to conflicts. For this reason, we reaffirm the right of the African continent to be represented among the permanent members of Security Council, as stated in the Ezulwini Consensus. We believe that the spirit of openness to dialogue, tolerance and common sense is key to solving the problems that currently plague humankind.

In this context, the Republic of Angola, which currently holds the presidency of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, has been engaged, in both the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, in seeking bilateral and multilateral solutions to the problems affecting the region. In this regard, we reaffirm our determination to continue to support and promote dialogue, peace, security and stability in Central Africa and throughout the Great Lakes region of Africa.

We welcome the successful conclusion of the peace and electoral processes in the Central African Republic, which have enabled the country to start a new era. Their new era requires support from the international community in order to promote national reconstruction and consolidate the country's institutions.

In South Sudan, the completion of the dialogue represents an important step towards the establishment of peace and the formation of a government of national unity to resolve the crisis in that country. The parties should be encouraged to honour their commitments, and the international community should maintain its support for the peace process.

With regard to Burundi, we call for the intensification of the dialogue for peace and urge respect for the legally established authority in order to overcome the impasse created by the post-electoral conflict. It is important to promote good neighbourliness and mutual security along the border separating Burundi from the adjacent countries.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we encourage support for the electoral process in order to ensure peaceful and free elections, the preservation of peace and stability, the reconciliation process and the consolidation of democracy. In fact, peaceful elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are vital for peace, stability and development in the entire Great Lakes region of Africa. Both the United Nations and the African Union should devote special attention to the crises in Libya, Mali, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Burundi.

We are facing a troubled international political environment that combines the escalation of conflicts — especially in the Middle East — with threats and constant episodes of violence that the international community has not been able to adequately address. Terrorism, a phenomenon that merits relentless combat, is the most extreme form of these threats. The world seems unprepared to deal with the ability of non-State groups and individuals eager to generate terror. The conflicts in Libya, Syria and Iraq in particular call for speedy resolution owing to their grave humanitarian repercussions.

The causes of those conflicts reside in the serious violations of the fundamental rights of the people involved and in foreign intervention, which has proved disastrous in its attempts to change the regime through the artificial imposition of supposed democracy, while the forced displacement of thousands of human beings that we see today constitutes a heartbreaking reality of human degradation and an offence against human dignity that demands an immediate and comprehensive response by the international community.

We recall that the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter must be respected by all Member States in all processes being implemented in the United Nations system. For this reason, it is worth highlighting that the process of detente between Cuba and the United States of America continues to need support from the international community. We welcome the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, which we hope will translate to the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba.

I would like to state that the Republic of Angola is firmly committed to implementing the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by adopting appropriate measures at the national level, to be implemented over the next 15 years, for the benefit of our people and our planet and to promote prosperity, stability and peace. To this end, Angola considers it important for all Member States to take a holistic, integrated and comprehensive approach in all sectors and at all levels in order to maintain the universal and inclusive nature of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Climate change is one of the most complex and urgent issues of domestic and foreign policy that we face today because of its impact on migration, food security, natural resources, the spread of epidemics and even on social and economic instability. Thus the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change is a valuable, ambitious, balanced and fair tool for action whose entry into force will encourage collective efforts to control global warming.

The Republic of Angola emits only 0.17 per cent of all greenhouse gases. However, the effects of climate change are already being felt by us in many ways, such as the deterioration and shortening of cycles of drought and heavy rainfall, which pose a risk to agriculture and to economic and social infrastructures. Such effects also increase the incidence of various endemic diseases. It is therefore our intention to ratify the Paris Agreement as soon as possible as testimony to our unequivocal commitment and contribution to achieving its objectives. For similar reasons, we are motivated to participate in the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, which will be held in Quito in October. The Conference represents an opportunity for us to adopt a new global urban agenda to promote strong links and synergies among urbanization, sustainable development and climate change.

The Republic of Angola is committed to three cross-cutting processes it considers of crucial importance: women and peace and security, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding architecture. We recognize the vital role of women and the importance of their participation in all stages and levels of the peace process.

I would be remiss not to mention here that the Republic of Angola is a stable country from the perspectives of political and social conditions, and this has helped it to consolidate its unity, its national reconciliation process and its institutions. On the economic front, the challenges are greater today as a result of volatility in the prices of raw materials on the international market. But we continue to work to adjust our action plans, as well as to find pathways to economic growth and the improvement of the lives of our people.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at it seventy-first session and to assure him of Angola's firm support during his tenure. I wish to congratulate Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his excellent work during the seventieth session. Let me also express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for dedicating his talent and wisdom to the service of the United Nations for the past 10 years and making a tangible contribution to international peace and security and to a safer world for present and future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Angola for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manuel Domingos Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jimmy Morales, President

of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin my statement by congratulating Mr. Peter Thomson on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, thanking Mr. Mogens Lykketoft for his work at the previous session and commending Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his leadership in ushering in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This year, Guatemala is celebrating two anniversaries that have characterized the political life of our country: 30 years of the Esquipulas peace process in Central America, and 20 years since the signature on 29 December 1996 of the Agreement on a firm and lasting peace. The Esquipulas agreements opened the door to political dialogue and negotiations and closed it to a geopolitical conflagration of unimaginable consequences in Central America.

The peace agreements in Guatemala marked not only the definitive ceasefire but also the creation of an agenda of far-reaching legal, institutional and cultural reforms. Guatemala has evolved since then, and the path to fulfilling those agreements has made a significant contribution to the country's development and modernization.

Nonetheless, some commitments have been postponed or are lagging, and now is precisely the time to evaluate and revitalize them. I am referring to critical issues, such as the identity and rights of indigenous people, rural development and the participation of women in all spheres of our society.

We acknowledge and are grateful for the support received from the United Nations and the Office of the Secretary-General, from the peace negotiation process to the monitoring of the implementation of the agreements concluded by the parties, including valuable support for the strengthening of democratic institutions. We recognize that the United Nations devoted an entire decade of laudable and patient efforts to the building of peace in my country.

The year 2015 changed the course of history in Guatemala. The people of Guatemala demonstrated their profound malaise with the State authorities that were betraying the Constitution. They categorically rejected the perverse system of corruption that had been sabotaging our development potential. Their malaise was expressed democratically, and I can state firmly that, after five consecutive months of peaceful demonstrations in town squares, the rule of law operates more robustly now than it did a year ago, and the people, who week after week took to the streets to protest and make their just and ethical demands, are now more confident in their own transformative power and their ability to create a different kind of country.

The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala played a catalysing and important role in changing the course of our country's history. The Commission is a Guatemalan initiative that was duly welcomed by the General Assembly and the Secretariat. It has become one of the most efficient tools of multilateral cooperation in the fight against the networks of crime and corruption that have co-opted strategic parts of States that, like Guatemala, have been challenged by the geopolitics of transnational organized crime.

My Government, which took office in January, owes its existence to the citizens' rejection of the old way of conducting politics. It represents the hope for a return to democratic governance that is ethically based on the common good and not on subordination to special interests. Such are the expectations that our honourable citizenry has placed in me. I must now strive to be the worthy son of such people by doing my bit in the moral and material reconstruction of the nation.

To meet the wishes of our citizens in their quest to transform the country, my Government has identified five strategic areas: transparency, health care, education, security and development.

With regard to transparency, we have committed to a policy of zero tolerance on corruption. To that end, open government has become a fundamental pillar of our Administration, based on transparency, collaboration and participation, and pursuant to the provisions of the inter-American and United Nations conventions against corruption. We know that corruption hampers development, weakens institutions and undermines the modernization of the State. That is why it is vital to combat that scourge.

With regard to public health, we are promoting the necessary reforms through strategic efforts focused on improving access for everyone and making primary care the core of the system. We are restoring the supply of medicines and the efficient functioning of hospitals and strengthening our human resource capacity. My

Government's priorities include reducing chronic malnutrition in children under five and maternal mortality. Today, we must sadly acknowledge that 5 out of every 10 children suffer from chronic malnutrition in my country, which in turn leads to extreme poverty. They have the choice of working from a young age on farms, turning to crime or migrating to the United States. We have therefore designed a national strategy to prevent chronic malnutrition as part of our food and nutrition security policy.

As for education, our responsibility is to ensure that every child has access to free, high-quality education, with a view to benefiting children and young people in Guatemala through comprehensive education programmes.

In the area of public safety, we have focused our attention on lowering rates of violence, delinquency and crime, using prevention policies as part of a comprehensive approach. We have been able to coordinate considerable efforts to deliver greater security to the population and strengthen the investigation and prevention capabilities of our police force, which has allowed us, in various ways, to lower rates of violent death.

Guatemala reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations and reiterates its multilateral and peaceful mission, convinced that global challenges, such as security, development, respect for human rights and climate change, should be addressed through dialogue and collective negotiation, as part of the global system. For Guatemala, human rights are intrinsically linked to respect, democracy and the rule of law. For that reason, strengthening the international human rights system is one of my Government's main priorities, and we are committed to promoting the highest international standards in that area through active participation in various forums. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to ask the international community for its support of my country's declaration of candidacy to the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019.

My country recognizes that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encompasses a transformative vision and provides a road map with Goals, targets and indicators to tackle the challenges that face humankind. Guatemala endorses the 2030 Agenda; it is aligned with the national development plan K'atun, Our Guatemala 2032, which was developed with the participation of various sectors of society in a resumption of medium- and long-term planning. Being aware that it is impossible to achieve sustainable development if we do not ensure the preservation of our planet's resources, my country did not hesitate in adopting the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which I had the honour of signing on 22 April in this very Hall.

I wish to express my deep respect and admiration for every single Guatemalan migrant who, through sacrifice and hard work, helps to support his or her family and Guatemala's development, as well as contributing to the development of the country in which he or she resides. These people really are unsung heroes, exemplary citizens. They live in every corner of the world, and they have rights and are entitled to be treated with greater dignity. It is for that reason that during my country's statement at the high-level meeting to address large movements of refugees and migrants (see A/71/PV.6 B), we were emphatic in our commitment to the promotion, protection and defence of the human rights of migrants and their families, regardless of their migration status, in origin, transit and destination countries.

Guatemala contends that multilateralism and the promotion of international law are indispensable in solving the problems facing our community of nations, and we hope that peaceful solutions can be found to overcome the differences between States. Guatemala is promoting cooperation schemes and good-neighbourliness in its surrounding area. I wish to express my country's deep commitment to resolving once and for all, at the International Court of Justice, its land, island and maritime dispute with Belize, a country with which we aspire to have a privileged relationship and to maintain permanent dialogue, as a way to solve our common problems.

In recent months, however, the Government of Belize has failed to reciprocate that attitude. Since 1999, the situation has claimed 10 Guatemalan civilian victims in the adjacency zone administered by Belize. On 20 April, a 14-year-old boy was the victim of a fatal attack by armed groups under the command of an army patrol from Belize. According to Belize's forensic report, the child died from multiple wounds caused by bullets from a high-powered rifle. Guatemalan forensic services confirmed that the child had nine bullet wounds — six in his back, two in the back of his neck and one on the front of his torso.

Such grave acts directly harm our two countries' bilateral relationship and hinder confidence-building. I wish to reaffirm the desire of the State of Guatemala to find a permanent solution to the dispute with Belize within the framework of international law, while also reminding the international community of the risks to international security that the continuous deadlock and disputed geographical demarcation pose. It is no secret that powerful transnational criminal organizations thrive on the differences between States and are capable of occupying pockets of undefined territories that lack effective control.

The President returned to the Chair.

Today's general debate comes at a time when we are facing serious threats to peace and stability in various countries — Iraq, Mali, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Central African Republic, the Sudan and South Sudan, to name but a few. The nuclear tests recently carried out on the Korean peninsula constitute a flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions and the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and we reiterate our strong condemnation of them.

I wish to stress that, for my country, peacekeeping operations and international security represent the ideal of serving under the flag of the United Nations, in an effort to support fellow countries. We are currently contributing to seven operations: in Haiti, Lebanon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are also honoured to be part of the special political mission in Colombia, one of Guatemala's neighbouring countries, to support the agreement to end the current conflict through a bilateral and permanent ceasefire, the surrender of weapons, security guarantees and an endorsement mechanism for the peace agreements. I congratulate the people and the Government of Colombia on that important achievement. We recognize the part played by the leadership of President Santos in the process and the contribution of the Government of Cuba to it. I also commend the intention to soon hold a plebiscite for the people of Colombia to ratify the peace agreements.

I wish to conclude both by congratulating all those who contribute to peace and by stating that the General Assembly allows us, as leaders, to reflect and ask ourselves if we are fulfilling the founding promise of the Organization to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to promote social progress, to live in peace as good neighbours and, finally, to unite our strength to universally transform our world and succeed in not leaving anyone behind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya.

Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Serraj *(spoke in Arabic)*: At the outset, I am happy to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. Allow me to wish you great success in your new function and to thank your predecessor, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for his leadership as President of the General Assembly during the seventieth session. I further wish to commend the stewardship of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and his part in implementing the goals of the Organization.

The situation in my country continues to cause concern throughout the world. The people of Libya appreciate the efforts of all those who have helped and continue to help them get through this very difficult period. After the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement following the Libyan Political Dialogue, which lasted nearly two years, a solution to political disagreements was reached. It established State institutions and the next step to be taken. The agreement is based on the separation of powers. Henceforth, we

will spare no effort to implement all the initiatives and peaceful solutions in order to resolve the disagreements.

Every attempt to bring opinions of the various parties closer together — including the ministerial meeting comprising 20 States held this morning — illustrates once again that a political agreement is the only viable solution. We call for follow-up efforts to continue the democratic process and establish stable institutions, so that we can realize the aspirations of the Libyan people, who have been waiting for this outcome since February 2011.

All of us would like to thank neighbouring countries, friendly countries, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations for their support during this difficult time. Despite the fragile situation of my country, the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya is sparing no effort to mitigate the suffering of the Libyan people and to create security and stability and ensure national reconciliation.

In order to establish the rule of law and its institutions, it is necessary to find the necessary financial resources in order to reach our goals. We therefore urge all States in possession of Libyan financial assets to facilitate the release of such assets in order to enable the Government to implement its policies.

We reiterate our commitment to strengthening the bonds of friendship and the cooperative relations with our brotherly and friendly States in order to achieve our common objectives. In that regard, we call for the return of diplomatic missions to Tripoli so that they can resume their work, and so that we can discuss and coordinate with them directly in implementing joint programmes and overcoming any corresponding difficulties. We understand the concern over security issues, but we are deeply committed to establishing and implementing programmes that will ensure our country's security.

My country reaffirms its unconditional condemnation and rejection of terrorism, whatever the manifestations, origin and motives. Terrorism is a global phenomenon that cannot be linked to any particular religion or belief. As we know, terrorist groups such as Da'esh are coming to our country from abroad. They are not only threatening the peace and stability of my country but are bent on exploiting our national resources, so that they can use them to reach other States in the region, Africa, Europe and the rest of the world to satisfy their lust for blood — which has no connection to Islam.

All States must therefore consolidate their efforts to eradicate terrorism, which targets innocent victims and creates economic and social instability, preventing their peoples from achieving their economic and development objectives. Despite our limited resources, we are waging a relentless war to eradicate terrorism. All States have witnessed the courage of our armed forces, the Libyan National Army, and our loyal and brave young men. As demonstrated by the war in which our finest died as martyrs defending our country, our unity enables us to confront any enemy, no matter how perfidious. In that regard, we hope that all States, in particular the members of the Security Council, will lift the arms embargo. And we call for the convening of an international high-level conference under the auspices of the United Nations, so that we can consolidate our efforts to fight terrorism.

With respect to human rights, since 2011 legislators in Libya have adopted a series of laws and decisions aimed at strengthening human rights. The Government of National Accord has reaffirmed its commitment to bolstering and protecting human rights. Nevertheless, difficulties arising out of the current transition period have caused a number of security challenges, which have led to several human rights violations. We hope that our efforts to enforce our laws will be supported by the international community. For our part, we will continue to fight impunity and put an end to all practices that lead to human rights violations. We reaffirm our need to receive technical assistance through mechanisms established by the Human Rights Council.

The flow of migrants is one of the main challenges facing us, with many of them crossing the Mediterranean in the hope of reaching Europe. The situation has had serious economic, social and security repercussions in Libya. It pains us to note that civil wars are the cause of this situation, which has led to the deaths of many innocent people on our beaches. Worse still, terrorist organizations have benefited from this situation in order to enable their members to head towards numerous countries across the globe. We welcome the regional and international efforts made in compliance with the principles of respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries and designed to put an end to this phenomenon. We reaffirm that we favour a security-based approach. The

appropriate solution will address the underlying causes of this dangerous migration.

We must all assist the countries of origin by implementing worthwhile development projects with a view to ending poverty and unemployment. We believe that in order to achieve this, the countries of origin, transit and destination must develop and implement strategies for cooperation, with the support of the African Union and the European Union and the encouragement of the international community.

Motivated by its commitment to peace and international security, Libya is participating in international disarmament efforts, especially with respect to weapons of mass destruction. My country, after joining the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, announced that it had reserves of chemical products, which it has now disposed of with the help of inspectors from the organization. We therefore welcome Security Council resolution 2298 (2016), which is designed to support Libya in ensuring the transfer of the remainder of its category 2 chemical weapons. In this endeavour, we commend the help of Denmark and Germany and thank those two countries.

Last year we adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals — an ambitious agenda for making economic, social and environmental progress by 2030. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and its outcome have strengthened our desire to achieve these Goals, upon which we have all agreed. However, words must become actions, and that must be done in an organized and effective way so that we can address the challenges of both today and tomorrow. This means that we are all responsible for supporting poorer countries in their policies and development, particularly those that depend on a single product for their financial resources. We must support them in diversifying their sources of income and in ensuring that their economic institutions reach the necessary level of competence. We must create an environment that is conducive to business.

There is a collective conviction of the need to reform the United Nations, especially the Security Council. The Council in its current form no longer reflects the contemporary realities of the twenty-first century, nor is it capable of addressing all the challenges that threaten international peace and security. We therefore call for a permanent seat on the Security Council, with all the corresponding privileges, to be accorded to the Arab States. In addition, we support the final communique of the 2010 Arab Summit in Sirte, and reaffirm the C. African position, set out in the Sirte Declaration of 2005, calling for two permanent seats with all corresponding privileges, including the veto. Satisfying this African demand would rectify a history of injustice and exclusion.

Peace in the Middle East will not be possible so long as Israel continues to occupy Palestinian territories, establishing settlements and Judaizing the city of Jerusalem. Israel continues to flout the resolutions of the international community on the rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to create an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. We once again demand that the blockade against the Palestinians be lifted. We call for the protection of the Palestinian people and for the occupying authorities to be obligated to cease all violent actions and all their settlement activities throughout Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

The people of Yemen and Syria — our brothers and sisters — have been living for five years now in catastrophic humanitarian conditions owing to the bloody conflicts and their tragic repercussions, which have led to the displacement of innocent citizens. We welcome all efforts to achieve a peaceful solution that will avoid the division and dismantling of these countries and instead fulfil the aspirations of these peoples.

In the light of the responsibility that I have agreed to assume, I wish to conclude by taking this opportunity to affirm my resolve to launch a comprehensive project for national reconciliation for all Libyans — those who live abroad and those who remain in Libya, both in the cities and the countryside, whatever their origin and background, and whatever their political beliefs and intellectual affiliation. I call for reconciliation with those who believe in the establishment of a strong State and a unified army that will defend us from all aggressors. I call for a State that enjoys true sovereignty, where no citizen will be harmed in any way. I call for transitional justice in order to maintain our rights. Libyans, there has been enough destruction and enough bloodshed; let us unite for justice, prosperity and security; let us move towards reconciliation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National

Accord of Libya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Vučić (Serbia): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Republic of Serbia.

First of all, I must say that I am profoundly grateful to all those present in the Hall because I know that there can be little excitement regarding my speech. Nevertheless, from time to time it is necessary for us to listen to one another. The general debate is an opportunity to highlight the numerous achievements of the world Organization in previous periods. At the same time, it is an opportunity to jointly reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as our readiness to strengthen our collective resolve to engage actively and to do more to promote peace and security, sustainable development and human rights in the interest of humankind as a whole.

The Republic of Serbia strongly supports the proposed theme for this year's general debate.

My country firmly believes that productive multilateralism is not only necessary but also achievable if we all demonstrate readiness, in a spirit of cooperation, compromise and flexibility, for joint engagement in the task of realizating the strategic vision of a better world for all of us. Political will is the first step in that direction, but it must be followed by both measures and practical activities. It is our deep-seated belief that this is the only way forward in a world of growing interdependence and complexity, where common challenges require common solutions.

We believe that peace is the foundation for all our common endeavours in fighting poverty, unemployment, organized crime, corruption, violence and all kinds of extremism; in fighting for a better world based on universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights and freedoms that apply to everyone, regardless of differences in race, gender, language or religion.

It seems to me that my words are familiar and that many other people have mentioned the same things. I therefore have an obligation to be as brief as possible, so I will not read my official speech but instead will hand out copies of it. I will speak to the Assembly in a different way. I will not use the teleprompters, as many speakers smarter than I have done in this debate.

Coming from a relatively small country in the Western Balkans, in the heart of Europe, and representing today a proud, dignified and freedom-loving people, I am very proud to have an opportunity to be speak here. I am very proud to see people in this great Hall who are ready to listen to those of us who come from small nations. There is no reason for us to address our own public to gain political points; we have enough votes to legitimately represent our people.

We have heard many impressive words from the representatives of the big Powers, but we have not heard in this general debate any suggestions for real solutions to some very important issues.

First of all, we have heard almost nothing about a comprehensive solution to the migrant crisis, which affects almost the entire world. Coming from a very small country in the Balkans, we have been waiting for a proposal by the big Powers. We will always agree with them and be ready to do our job together with them. Even though my country is not a State member of the European Union, we have been ready to participate in its quota system. However, nobody within the European Union accepted that system. But now we do not know what our policy on that issue should be, because countries differ as to their policies. We should share the same values, but instead completely different solutions leave us with no idea how to negotiate all the bumps in the road ahead.

I must also add that the migrant crisis is far from over. It has just begun. Today, Serbia is currently facing a greater number of difficult issues than it faced a year ago. Today, we have more than 7,000 migrants within our borders. Bulgaria has the same number. Those people cannot go anywhere else because all the other

countries have already closed their borders. I have a question for all delegations. Are there any common solutions for us? Is there something that we can all do together? There are some steps that we can take for ourselves and by ourselves. We will do that, but we will continue to await a common, comprehensive solution from both the European Union and the United Nations, because the current situation is not coming to an end. It will not end in a few days, a few weeks or a few months.

We call the Assembly's attention to a few other issues. Delegations know that my country has faced many difficulties over the past 25 years. During the past 100 years, I think that we did not miss a single war, from the first Balkan War to the most recent wars in the 1990s. I hope that in the future we will have enough strength to overcome all disputes and to do more for our people and their economic development.

We recently succeeded in delivering better economic results. For the first time in our contemporary history, we have a surplus in our budget. After many years of crises, we will have a growth rate that exceeds 3 per cent this year, and we expect even better growth rates in the years to come. That does not compare with the growth rates of some countries in Asia and Africa, like the country of my friend the Prime Minister of Mauritius, but it is still better than the average growth rate in Europe, and we are very proud to be able to say that today.

I have been highlighting various issues because we are once again facing instability in the region, which could jeopardize almost every gain we have made. This is something I have been signalling for the past two years. To tell the truth, we have received a great deal of support from the United Nations and all our friends — in the West and the East — but still the situation in the Western Balkan region has not improved. That is why we worry a lot, and why I think that we need to invest even more effort, more time and more of our political will to overcome all the difficulties, disputes, quarrels and enmities inherited from the past.

We have faced some terrible insults from some of our neighbours. I will not reply to them in kind today. They have said that my people are a handful of poor, miserable wretches. These are things nobody should say about any nation anywhere. We have decided not to respond to them, and we will stay on that track. We will not be so gross about anybody, even though we may be insulted and offended again.

Why am I saying that? I am saying that because I think that the Western Balkan region needs peace, stability, better understanding and real reconciliation in the future. Have we succeeded in that over the past 20 to 25 years? I dare say we have not, or not entirely. Hatred is even more bitter among the people of some countries in the Western Balkans, but at least we have succeeded in preserving the peace and maintaining calm and tranquillity. We will do our best to keep up the pace, to stress economic development and to preserve and develop our political relationship in a different way than we used to.

Once again, we are very thankful to those nations that were not on our side, but on the side of international public law. They did not support the unilaterally proclaimed independence of our southern province, Kosovo and Metohija. We are profoundly grateful to the Member States that abided by the United Nations Charter.

We are persistent in continuing our dialogue and conversations with Kosovo Albanians, because we need to live together. We need to create a common future. These talks are facilitated by the European Union, and we are deeply committed and dedicated to carrying on with them. We will remain ready to inform the Assembly about the results of these conversations, and we hope that the situation in Kosovo and Metohija will not be a source of instability in future. That is at least one good conclusion from my speech of today.

There are several other issues at stake. We face various dangers, and many factors could jeopardize our future sustainable development. There is a greater presence of terrorist cells in various countries in the Western Balkans, and, together with the rest of the world, we will do our best to fight that terrible evil. That is why we joined the coalition to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. I am proud to say that we will always be with the better side of the world, the side of the world that will preserve peace, stability and the values for which the modern world is fighting.

Serbia will do its best not only to protect its own national and State interests but also to listen to the other small and relatively small countries, because we need to unite, otherwise I am very much afraid that our voice will not be heard in future.

I think that the General Assembly can be satisfied that, at least in the past three or four years, we have all been hearing that Serbia is a pillar of stability in the

Western Balkans. We are proud of that fact. That will remain the case for the next 5, 10, 20 years, and I hope that we will be able to create a better world and better cooperation, particularly among us smaller countries in the world. We will do our best, at least from our side, to listen and to see what we can achieve all together.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Algeria.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured and privileged to address the Assembly on behalf of Algeria and to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. We share the priorities that you have identified for this session, and we reaffirm our commitment to working with you to achieve them. I wish also to express Algeria's gratitude to your predecessor for the initiatives he took when he presided over the Assembly.

This session began in the context of a turbulent global situation that is deeply concerning, in addition to the long-standing conflicts to which no solution is in sight. There are new threats to international peace and security that require urgent and serious action. The international community is witnessing unprecedented mass movements of people not seen since the Second World War. A high-level meeting was dedicated to this issue three days ago in order to identify the developments that have taken place in the context of this serious phenomenon. The images of the thousands of people who have had no choice other than to take a perilous journey cannot be seen only from the perspective of migration. Conventional solutions, such as exclusion, cannot be used here.

The situation is in fact a test for all of us. In that respect, the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, during his presidency of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session, said, from this very rostrum:

> "The concept of universality is also a moral necessity. It means that in the face of the unity of humankind, racial barriers are crumbling away in the same way as differences in economic and social status are gradually fading." (*A/PV.2233, para. 28*)

We can conclude from this idea, expressed by President Bouteflika more than 40 years ago, that the ability of the international community to overcome such phenomena will require great solidarity. Algeria contributes to such actions as well as to the quest for lasting solutions that reflect our commitment to the values and principles upon which the United Nations was founded.

In order to address such challenges, and learning from the painful lessons of the Second World War, the founders of the United Nations devised a collective security order based on equality, which must be enhanced on an ongoing basis so as to reject narrow interests and intolerance in all their forms. If there is one main task that we have to champion in the United Nations, it is for this Organization to be the main catalyst of the hopes of all peoples. Our Organization, given its moral stature, must earn the respect of all Member States. It should be a source of inspiration to all of humankind in situations of crisis with respect to the right to self-determination, respect for human rights, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and all of the other principles enshrined in the Charter.

It is clearer than ever before that the United Nations is facing unprecedented challenges. Now is the time to stress that the United Nations is a unique body and is capableof mobilizing the required consensus and overcoming the challenges at hand. It is unfair to blame our Organization for all the violations that are taking place in the world. Such violations may be attributed only to Member States, because our Organization is a reflection of their political will.

We cannot indefinitely postpone the reform and modernization of United Nations mechanisms, for which Algeria has called repeatedly. In this respect, I must express our satisfaction with the outcome of the Non-Aligned Movement Summit recently held in Venezuela. The Movement has stressed the urgent need for such reform. Reform of the United Nations has taken on special importance.

We are required to provide answers to a simple question. Are the mechanisms that were put in place after the Second World War still valid, given that most of the world's people were not independent at the time? International balances of power and policies were

different then. The answer is that we need to redesign the entire system of global governance with respect to political, economic, security and environmental matters. This is not impossible. The wise consensus of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is evidence of the fact that reform can be achieved through negotiation. Such fruitful and laudable negotiation can guarantee success.

The challenges to development are growing, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. There is no single person who is immune to the current security threats. That is evidenced by the threats of international terrorism that occur every day. Redoubling efforts to bring about peace in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan and the Central African Republic and to peacefully settle the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi is a moral and political obligation for the international community.

Regarding the just cause of Palestine and its occupied territories, the failure of the international community to find a viable solution that would include the full recognition of the rights of Palestinian people and the territories occupied since 1967, and that would establish Palestine as an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, serves to underline the failure of the contemporary international order.

Mr. El Hayeen (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In our Maghreb region, whose inhabitants have much in common, the mission to bring peace to Western Sahara, led by the United Nations, has encountered a couple of hurdles this year. The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, has lost some of its authority. Such developments threaten the integrity of the approach taken by the United Nations. This disturbing situation underlines once again the urgent need to settle such disputes in accordance with international legitimacy and to implement the inalienable right of the Sahrawi to self-determination. Hence, in this particular situation, we would like to stress again that the United Nations is still committed to ending the occupation in Western Sahara.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda represents progress and gives us hope of attaining our noble goal of ensuring that no one is left behind. But international economic expectations and the outlooks of international organizations dampen our optimism, because they note the magnitude of the challenges faced. Such challenges threaten the success of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the reduction of poverty. Additionally, they denote declining investments in developing countries and a decline in the amount of the official development assistance (ODA) that we will receive. ODA has already been in decline for the past couple of years. The trend towards reduced ODA from rich countries will prove even more detrimental as the financial needs of developing countries grow.

Developed countries must change their consumption patterns in a way that benefits production in developing countries. The commitments we have made to reducing inequality require a genuine transformation of the economic models of rich countries that will take into consideration the interests of all. The same principle has to apply to the transfer of technology to developing countries, since technology is an urgent prerequisite if they truly are to enhance national capabilities. In this respect, the highest priority has to be given to Africa to enable it to build infrastructure and fulfil basic needs like water and electricity supply. In addition, it is necessary to enable African countries to participate in income-generating activities at the global level and to be economically competitive.

Algeria has undertaken its development efforts in a spirit of self-reliance. We have drawn on our own resources by utilizing innovative financial tools. That which Algeria seeks for the United Nations in terms of reform, openness and transparency has been applied in Algeria. Under the strong leadership of its President, Algeria adopted a constitutional amendment whose democratic provisions are designed to enhance the rule of law, increase individual freedoms, bolster the institutional role of opposition parties, liberate national economic capacities, empower women and establish Amazigh languages as official national languages. That is an important step on our historic path. It will help to build a peaceful, open and strong community. Since Algeria is stable and at peace with itself, it can also effectively contribute to bringing about peace, security, stability and prosperity in neighbouring countries and beyond.

Algeria, which is making a renewed commitment to the United Nations and to what it represents, commends the commitment made by Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whose tenure as Secretary-General is coming to an end.

Mr. Ban undertook his responsibilities wholeheartedly and achieved significant results. He demonstrated that the task of Secretary-General is not an impossible one for a person like himself, who made every effort, using his heart and mind, to achieve the noble goals that he committed to when he was elected. We would like t thank him and to wish him every success in his ne endeavours.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.